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of Engineers**

Jacksonville District

News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers begins pulse releases to Caloosahatchee Estuary

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District, will start a fresh water pulse release from Lake Okeechobee to the Caloosahatchee Estuary at 7 a.m., tomorrow, Jan. 12. There have been no releases from Lake Okeechobee to the estuaries since Dec. 3, and as with that release, none will be made to the St. Lucie Estuary at this time.

The targeted flow of the release to the Caloosahatchee Estuary is an average flow over 11 days of 650 cubic feet per second (cfs). The Corps anticipates this release will benefit the ecology of the upper Caloosahatchee Estuary by maintaining variability in desired salinity levels in that area.

“According to the 2008 Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule, the lake level is within what we call the ‘base flow sub-band.’ These releases are in line with the schedule, and we expect they will improve conditions in the upper estuary,” said Col. Al Pantano, Jacksonville District commander. “If it were to rain in the basin that feeds the upper estuary, we would ratchet back on releases from the lake accordingly. In the absence of precipitation and runoff, we’ll positively affect the estuary by releasing a small amount from the lake. While the effect of this release on the volume of water in the lake is negligible, the benefits to the estuary are important and significant.”

Today, the lake stage is 13.47 feet National Geodetic Vertical Datum. The lake is within the Operational Band of the 2008 regulation schedule. More specifically, the lake level is in the Base Flow Sub-band. In accordance with the regulation schedule, releases may be made up to 450 cfs and 200 cfs to the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie, respectively. Flexibility within the schedule allows the redistribution of releases to the

east and west to minimize impacts or to provide additional benefits.

After the pulse release is complete, the Corps will reassess the conditions and coordinate closely with the South Florida Water Management District and an array of affected agencies, local governments and stakeholders regarding future actions.

A pulse-type release more closely resembles the naturally occurring pattern of runoff into the estuary caused by rain, which normally leads to an increase in flow as rain continues to fall, followed by a gradual decrease as runoff comes to an end. Water managers expect these releases to help maintain salinity ranges that are conducive to the sustainability of estuarine organisms in the upper estuary. These releases also benefit the overall ecology of this area by promoting the mixing of salinity levels and nutrient concentrations from one water level to another.

For more information on water level data and flows for Lake Okeechobee and the Central and Southern Florida Project, visit the Corps' water management page at <http://www.saj.usace.army.mil/Divisions/Engineering/Branches/WaterResources/WaterMgt/index.htm>.

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